

NEWS RELEASE

Indiana Criminal Justice Institute



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Indiana Seat Belt Usage Rate Climbs to Over 90 Percent

Surveys show that Hoosiers are buckling up in record numbers

Indianapolis, IN. –Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) Executive Director, Neil Moore today announced that Indiana’s overall observed seat belt usage rate has reached a record high of 91.2 percent. This surpasses the 2007 record of 88.4 percent by more than two points, according to surveys conducted during the 2008 “Click It or Ticket” statewide enforcement mobilization.

“These numbers are extremely impressive and speak to the level of importance Hoosiers are putting on their safety,” said Executive Director, Moore. “This data is a strong indicator of the remarkable strides that we are all making to save lives on Indiana’s roadways,” Moore continued.

The highest rate of observed seat belt usage, more than 95 percent, was among female drivers and passengers. In slightly fewer numbers, male drivers and passengers were buckled up at a rate of about 88 percent. There was also an increase in seat belt usage rates among pickup trucks with numbers jumping 14 points since 2007 to more than 79 percent in 2008.

“The single most effective way a person can prevent death or injury in a vehicle collision is the use of a seat belt,” said Ryan Klitzsch, ICJI Traffic Safety division director. “Our goal is to sustain awareness of this message while supporting state and local law enforcement agencies in their year-round efforts to enforce Indiana’s seat belt law.”

Indiana traffic fatalities are also down approximately 25 percent (121) in comparison to this time last year. Data derived from the 2007 Indiana Occupant Protection Fact sheet, published by ICJI indicates that 54 percent of the individuals killed in car crashes in 2006 (where restraint usage was known) were unrestrained.

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“Every Seat, Every Trip, Every Time!”

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Nearly 80 percent of individuals killed in pickup trucks, also in 2006 (where restraint usage was known) were unrestrained. The Traffic Safety division of ICJI estimates that 269 lives could have potentially been saved if those killed would have worn seat belts. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has determined that seat belts are more than 50 percent effective in preventing a fatality when a crash occurs.

“Motorists should remember that wearing a seat belt is not only their best defense against death or injury in a crash – it’s the law,” said Indiana State Police Superintendent, Paul Whitesell.

“We are striving for 100 percent compliance, and until that goal is met, there is still work to be done,” Whitesell added.

In 2007, Governor Mitch Daniels closed the loophole in Indiana’s previous seat belt law by enacting legislation that requires all occupants of every passenger motor vehicle, including pickup trucks, and those vehicles plated as such, to buckle up regardless of where they are seated in the vehicle. During the 2008 “Click It or Ticket” mobilization, law enforcement officers cited more than 23,000 motorists for failure to comply with Indiana’s current seat belt law.

The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) serves as the state's planning agency for criminal justice, juvenile justice, traffic safety, and victim services. ICJI develops long-range strategies for the effective administration of Indiana's criminal and juvenile justice systems and administers federal and state funds to carry out these strategies.

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